

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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MARCH 21, 1920



BACK-FIRING BY EFFIE EGBERT

Part I.

IT was the most terrible fire you ever saw. Arch said it was, and so did Aunt Patty. Not like a house on fire in the city, where the firemen put it out before you even see the blaze, but three whole mountain tops, all burning at the same time.

We couldn't see the fire from our house, because there was a mountain in the way, but we saw thick clouds of smoke rolling up, and that frightened Aunt Patty. She said that in this dry climate, where we'd had no rain for six months, a fire could do incalculable damage.

Arch and I started right off for it. It didn't look very far, but it was. At first we ran, then we got tired and walked, then we ran again. We went by the path that goes along the Pacific Gas and Electric Company's ditch. After we'd walked two miles—Arch said it was that far—we saw a woman, with a blue kitchen apron on and no hat, run out of some woods and stand on the log bridge over the ditch and wave and wave to us. We hurried up to her, but before we got anywhere near, she shouted at us: "Children! Children! Run! Run quick down to Adams's"—she pointed to a white house in the flat below the ditch—"and tell them we're all on fire, and it's getting close to the barn, and if you see anybody else, ask them to come too."

She didn't tell us her name, and we didn't stop to ask, but Mr. Adams knew. He was sawing wood at a big woodpile back of the house, and he had three sons helping him. They hadn't even seen the smoke. Instead of running right off to the fire the way Mrs. Wilkins—that was

the woman's name—wanted them to, they went off the other way toward a big shed.

"The mean things!" I said. "Why don't they come?"

"No use coming," Arch said, "unless they get something to fight the fire with."

"What?" I asked. "Fire-hose?"

Arch just looked at me. "Yes, and they'll attach them to the water hydrants that grow in the hills. They've gone for axes and shovels. That's what you fight fire with in the mountains."

I can't think how Arch finds out things like that that I don't know about at all. Anyway they came hurrying back and they had axes and shovels over their shoulders, and Mr. Adams was saying: "Don't spend breath running. You'll need it all after you get there, from the looks of that smoke."

So they walked, but I never saw such stridy kind of walking. Seven-league boots would be nothing. I had to dog-trot all the time to keep up. When we got there a lot more neighbors had come and were back-firing. That means they were making a strip of bare ground so if the fire tried to cross it there wouldn't be anything for it to run in. Then they set fire to the places between the strip and the real fire and made a big burned place where the fire wouldn't come again.

It was awfully exciting. Everybody was working like mad, chopping off brush with hard, fast licks and hoeing dead leaves and "mountain misery" off the strip. Mrs. Wilkins packed all of her husband's papers and her wedding silver in a tin box and put it in a machine that belonged to a neighbor, with the machine headed down hill, ready to go right off

if the house caught afire. And she pitched a lot of other things into sheets and tied them up in big white bundles ready to throw into the machine too.

Mr. Adams, who knew all about mountain fires and began to tell everybody what to do the minute he got there, said they mustn't let the fire get down in the canyon east of the house, because a canyon draws just like a chimney and it was going to be a close shave as it was, but the wind was favorable. He sent his three sons and two other men down there, and he told Arch to take a wet sack and slap the fire out of the dry woods near the turkey-pen. I said I could do that too. Mr. Adams looked at me and said, "Better get that skirt wet first." Mrs. Wilkins said there was a barrel of water by the kitchen door, and I climbed into it and jumped up and down until the water leaked out of my shoes and my khaki skirt was dripping wet and heavy as lead. Then I battered fire with a wet sack, too, until my face got so hot I thought it was going to burst open. While I was doing it, there was some dead chaparral near me caught and—zip!—just like that, it was all in red flames with the queerest little but awful sounds coming out of it. The men said it was a wood-rats' nest, one of those big ones made of dried sticks and brush. Dozens of rats scampered out of it and didn't know where to go, because on one side was fire and on the other side people. I felt sorry for the poor things. And they weren't bad looking at all. They had nice soft fur and bright eyes, but Darby—that's Arch's dog the Indian gave him—and three black dogs pounced on them and killed them.

By that time the house was safe and Mr. Adams told everybody to go down the canyon. He showed Arch a place where he wanted some brush cut out, but I didn't have anything to do. Mr. Adams said I had a nimble pair of legs and if anything went wrong they'd use me as a messenger to get more help. About a quarter of a mile down the canyon there was a long sugar-pine log that had fallen from the opposite hillside and made a high bridge across the canyon. He said if that got afire I must run down where they were working and tell them, because they didn't want the fire to cross to the hill where the house was.

I watched a long time and it didn't start to burn, but an oak not very far from its roots did, and it looked lovely. It was hollow in the middle and the fire shot right up through it, just as if it had been a brick chimney. Then pieces of the top toppled off and somehow it looked as if the oak enjoyed burning up. It wasn't a bit like the pines that shivered and twisted. While I was sitting on the ground watching my tree, a bunch of small pines with some dead manzanitas beyond caught fire. They made a roar, but when the flames died down the roar



"Go it! Go it! Go it!"

kept on. It sounded awfully queer. I didn't like it, because it sounded way up in the air and at the same time near the ground. I wondered if the moon was falling down, and just then I thought what it was. It was an airplane. There's a forest fire patrol flies over every day. It sounded so close and so loud I thought it was going to do something about the fire. I knew Arch would want to see it land, so I screamed to him. He came running. He said of course it wouldn't land, because the fire patrol looks after government land only, and this was a private fire. That's another one of those things Arch knows and I didn't.

After he'd looked at it awhile, but couldn't see it, because there was so much smoke, he said: "Gee whiz! That does sound close." We looked and looked, but couldn't see a thing. Then all of a sudden it sailed out into the clear air, and it was low. We could see the black and white on it. Arch stared at it a minute and then he just yelled, "Transcontinental racer!" He took off his cap, threw it up in the air, and kept on yelling: "Go it! Go it! Go it!" It was going fast enough too without his telling them. We could see even up in the air that it was different from the fire patrol. Arch was more excited about it than about the fire. "I'll bet you we've staged something for them they didn't see along the rest of their route," he said. Mr. Adams said afterward that it was a bonfire of welcome to California.

After the plane got out of sight we noticed that Darby was barking his head off. He always does at the airplanes, but he was crazier than ever about this one. There's so much of Darby gone that when he does anything, like barking hard, he looks funny. It made Arch laugh, but right while he was laughing he stopped and looked scared, because Darby was on the opposite hillside. We think he'd

gone over there after rats, and the men had backfired, but of course Darby didn't know anything about that, and there he was. All between him and us was burning ground, and where he was was going to burn, because the wind blew in that direction. Arch whistled and called to him, but when he'd start and get his paws on something hot, he'd stop and wouldn't come.

"Bound over it quick, and it won't hurt you," Arch kept saying. But Darby doesn't understand English, even if Arch does say he does. Poor dog! He'd sit down on his stumpy tail, with his lame paw held up and his head cocked to one side, and whine. It was pitiful. Arch coaxed and coaxed him, but it didn't do any good. Finally Arch crossed the tree, knelt down, put out his hand and whistled soft. Darby stopped to think a minute, then gave three awful jumps and got through the burning leaves to a little mound of bare ground that the roots of the tree had jerked up when it fell. We thought it was all right then and that

Darby would get on the tree and come across. But he wouldn't do it. He mistrusted the tree. I think he thought it would burn his paws. Everything else he touched had. Arch tried to grab him to carry across, but the dog yelped as if Arch was going to kill him, and ran away up in the brush. Arch was awfully cut up because Darb wouldn't trust him, but I said he ought to remember that poor Darb had always been an outcast. Arch was beginning to get a little bit mad, even if he was sorry for Darby.

"It's too bad there isn't a pig on this side," I said. "He'd come quick enough then." Darby never can see a pig without running after it. He just loves to get hold of their ears and hear them squeal.

Arch turned round quick, looked at me hard, then said: "By Jingo, Bett, you've said something. I'll get one."

(To be continued.)

Lines for a Girl's Study.

NOW may I very worthy be
Of this most godly company—

The good familiar folk that throng
This room, from history and song:

Scholars and poets, scribes and seers,
Forgathering from other years;

High-hearted queens from distant days,
Gray pilgrims treading patient ways;

Soldiers and captains, knights and kings,
Brave men of far adventurings—

Each of earth's beautiful and best
Draws near to be my gracious guest.

Shall I not offer for my part
At least an understanding heart,

Good will, good work and courtesy
For such a gracious company?

—*Youth's Companion.*

By Dessie's Quick Help.

BY YETTA KAY STODDARD.

DESSIE FOLKTON was hanging, blindfolded, over the edge of Big Cliff. She could neither jump to the ground below nor climb back to the trail above. She swung about like a great spider at the end of a thin thread—and yet, for herself, she was not in the least frightened.

"You will have to wait a minute, Dessie," a voice was saying. "I'll be back quickly. Nothing can hurt you if you keep very still."

To keep very still in mid-air! Dessie was trying, but it was impossible. She was thinking of all that had happened since breakfast-time that morning.

"Let's go up to Big Cliff," Dessie had begged, when her father said that he was not going to the office. "We've never been there, though we've lived in Bluff Hollow a whole year."

"What do you think, mother?" Mr. Folkton had asked.

"I think it will be a nice thing to do," said his wife, beginning to lay out things for the lunch-baskets.

At ten o'clock they were tying up the little boat that had brought them along the lakeshore to the landing-place which was at the only entrance to Big Cliff. They had made the ascent and reached the highest point at the end of a winding trail in time to sit down to lunch when the noon-whistles were blowing in the town below.

"Oh, I can see our own house!" cried Dessie.

"Yes," said her father. "The road under this rocky wall leads to Main Street. If we could slide down the face of the cliff we could be home again in half an hour."

"Help spread the shawls!" called Mrs. Folkton. "Why, here's an old sheet. Did you put it into the basket, Dessie?"

"Yes, mother, I thought it would be nice to spread on the ground under the shawls, and then if we find any pebbles and shells we can tie them into it," explained the little girl.

"Well, I hope you are not going to fill it. You'll swamp the boat!" laughed her father.

Now that old sheet was serving for a rope by which Dessie was hanging; hoping to be able to reach the road, to run into town, and to bring the doctor in time to save her mother's life.

After they had eaten and the baskets had been packed for the homeward journey, Dessie and her father had gone "exploring." They had climbed to the top of a balanced rock.

"Look out, mother!" called Dessie, as they felt the rock breaking loose. Man and child leaped away unhurt, but the edge of the great mass struck Mrs. Folkton, pinning her foot to the ground. Dessie and her father dug away the earth and dragged her mother out from beneath the crushing weight.

Mrs. Folkton had fainted, and her husband knew that help must come to her quickly. But how, how? He could not leave her and Dessie alone while he went around by boat for a doctor. He could not carry his wife down the long trail. Dessie could not find her way alone.

"Let me go over the cliff, Daddy!" proposed Dessie.

"You're not afraid?" asked her father.

"No. I can get Dr. Burkett quickly. He can come in his steam launch. Maybe he can bring his motor-cycle and ride it up the trail."

Swiftly they worked. Dessie tore the sheet into strips; her father knotted the ends together. Then, writing a note to Dr. Burkett, pinning it into Dessie's dress, Mr. Folkton wrapped his coat around the child's waist that the rope might not hurt her, tied his handkerchief over her eyes that she might not get dizzy, kissed her, and lifted her out over the cliff.

Slowly down—and down—and down—she had felt herself steadily going. Then suddenly she hung swinging out there!

"Suppose something has happened to Daddy!" she thought. "Suppose the rope breaks!" But her father's voice had said that nothing could hurt her if she kept still. So she waited, wondered, grew anxious, but not frightened, not one bit frightened. She could see herself running at top speed along the road below in just a minute or two.

"Dessie, dear, the rope was not long enough," her father was shouting. "It's all right now. Here you go!"

And now down again. And oh, the good earth under her feet once more! Quickly she pulled off the handkerchief, loosened the rope about her waist, calling, "Oohoo, Oohoo!" to let her father know she was safe.

Then she sped down the road to Dr. Burkett's.

It was not more than an hour and a half later when on an angrily chugging motor-cycle, Dessie returned, clinging to Dr. Burkett as he forced the machine along Big Cliff trail.

"Just in time!" whispered the doctor, bending over Mrs. Folkton.

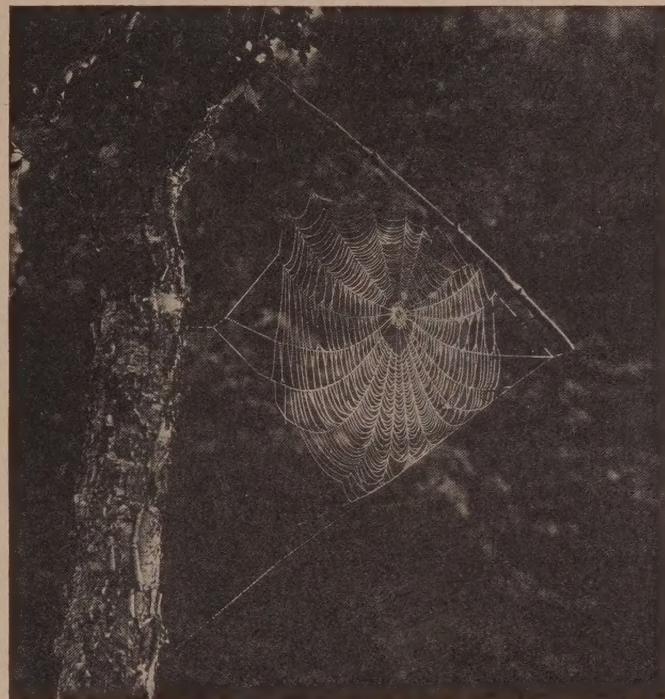
Pictures.

BY WINIFRED ARNOLD.

SALLY looked up from her book as her Aunt Mary entered the library. "I've been reading the saddest, no, I mean the most solemn story, Aunt Mary," she said in an awed sort of voice, "about the artist Spinello, who painted such a terrible picture of Lucifer that when it was finished he fell down and died before it, literally frightened to death by his own picture! Aunt Mary, do you think it would be possible for anybody to make with his own hands so terrible a thing that it would frighten him to death?"

Aunt Mary sat down in the big chair facing Sally. "Yes," she said gently, "I am afraid it is at least possible, dear. It seems hard to believe it about a picture, I admit; but, as a great scientist said the other day, we daren't say that anything really cannot be true, because if there were no fish in the sea, for instance, every one would declare that life under water was quite impossible.

"And if we extend the meaning beyond the pictures that are painted on canvas to those that we are all painting every day of our lives,—all pictures, of every sort, are sketched first in our own hearts and minds, you see,—as Spinello's must have been,—before they can be worked out either on canvas or in our own and other people's lives.



By Beatrice B. Bell.

The Spider's House.

BY VLYN JOHNSON.

THE Mother Spider's house of lace
Is builded in an airy place.
She weaves it swiftly to and fro
Where baby spiders soon may go.

It is a many-windowed house,—
She builds in that way like her spouse.
She so enjoys a lovely view,
And then the windows catch the dew.

The houses that her husband builds
Are those the sunshine brightly gilds.
You find them early on the lawn,
Then suddenly they all are gone.

But Mother Spider likes the air,
And hangs her lacy home up where
The babies may swing to and fro,
And up and down quite freely go.

It swings so softly in the sun,
The house she weaves is quickly done,
And looks as though a tiny breeze
Would send it flying through the trees.

And yet it's so secure it seems
Like houses fairies build in dreams,
Because they know just how and where
To build them safely in the air.

"And that's the solemn thing, my dear, to me; for those sketches of ours work out so inevitably, whether we will or no. To change the figure, it's really more like enlarging a photograph—things that we hardly realized were there when we carelessly took the picture show up so plainly, and may spoil it all.

"I am particularly impressed by this just now, because, as so often happens, it fits on so perfectly to a story which I heard to-day about a man, an old acquaintance of mine, who has made such a wreck of his own life that he tried his best to die when he was brought face to face with it. Another Spinello's picture, you see.

"And think of the hundreds of people who might have been painting pictures of brightness and joy all around them in other people's lives, but who have selfishly made pictures of want and unhappiness instead. If they could really see and realize, wouldn't they want to die?"

"O Aunt Mary," groaned Sally, "don't, please don't! It makes life too awful and solemn."

Aunt Mary smiled then—her own usual cheery smile. "Yes," she said, "it might, if it weren't for the happy fact that the kind of pictures that we paint in our own minds and hearts is absolutely within our own power. Nobody in the world can force us to make anything but beautiful pictures there, the kind that we can be happy and proud for all the world to see. We need never be afraid, Sally, while we are looking after our inner pictures, painting into them the very best we know."

"And there's a story on the bright side, too, as well as the other. Perhaps you've heard me tell it before, for it's a great favorite of mine.

"It's about a sculptor who was living in a little studio in Paris, a very bare little studio up among the roofs of Montmartre, and was working with all his might to make the most beautiful statue in the world. He had to model it in clay first, of course, but every day he worked from morning till night, adding here, changing there, trying to bring forth an image of the wonderful beauty that was hidden



THE BEACON CLUB

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.



Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Beacon Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

64 COURT STREET,
HULTON, ME.

Dear Miss Buck,—As already I am a Beacon Club member it is unnecessary for me to tell you how much I enjoy *The Beacon* and the Letter Corner, but I thought that perhaps you would be interested to hear about our Junior Alliance, which was started this winter.

Every Monday we meet in the kitchen of the church and work on articles for the sale that we are going to have at Easter-time. Just now we are painting candy-boxes and flower-pots. Once a month we invite the Boys' Club of the church and have a social meeting. The Boys' Club and the Junior Alliance are going to give a play soon. The boys and girls co-operate with fine spirit, as both are working to get enough money to build some tennis courts for the use of both clubs.

Your interested reader,
GERTRUDE C. MCINTYRE.
(Age 16 years.)

MARLBORO, MASS.

Dear Miss Buck,—In our Sunday school each class has been formed into a club. In our class there are six girls, and we have chosen "The Beacon Class" for our name, and our motto and purpose will be the same as in the Beacon Club.

We would like to have buttons to wear as our badge. We enjoyed the Sunday you were out very much, and two of our number were in the little play of David which you had us act out.

away in his heart and brain, clamoring for expression.

"And finally, the day before Christmas he finished it,—an image in clay of all the highest beauty and loveliness that he could conceive of,—ready to be put into imperishable marble as soon as he could afford to buy marble beautiful and pure enough for his pure and beautiful image.

"But that night a sudden, sharp frost fell upon Paris. And in his fireless attic the sculptor waked to feel the bitter cold and to realize that there was danger that his beautiful statue, made only of clay, and covered with a damp cloth, might freeze and crack and so be spoiled and lost to the world forever. Jumping out of bed he gathered up all his scanty wardrobe and wrapped it around his statue. But still the cold grew more intense. An ominous crack from a glass of water on his washstand startled him. The statue was not yet safe. Without a thought for himself and his own comfort he dragged the coverings from his bed and wrapped them around the beloved figure.

"In the morning the people who came to his room found the body of the sculptor kneeling with his arms about his statue and frozen to death, but the statue itself was quite unharmed. He had lost his life, but he had saved for the world the beauty of his heart and soul.

"That is the other possibility, you see, and the glorious one that all the saints and sages and heroes of the world have seized. To make of our loveliest and highest ideals so beautiful a picture that our lives will seem but a small price to pay for its safety."

We are studying "Children of the Father" and like it very much.

Mr. Conner is our minister, and we are all very fond of him. We like the stories in *The Beacon* and to work out the puzzles.

With very best wishes for *The Beacon* we remain

Your friends,

ELIZABETH BIGELOW, President.
PEARL SMITH, Vice-President.
LUCILLA JONES, Secretary.
HARRIET LEONARD, Treasurer.
ELEANOR TEMPLE.
ANNA BENSON.
ADDIE HOWARD, Teacher.

Greeting and good wishes to our new namesake!

Other new members are Anna May French, Iowa City, Ia.; David Tashjian, Kalamazoo, Mich.; Einar Midtbruget, Hanska, Minn.; Louise Eisenlohr, Cincinnati, Ohio; Charles Cadwell, Cleveland, Ohio; Grace E. Brownell, Newport, R.I.

In Massachusetts, new members are Buberta Bailey, Arlington; Dorothy Ellicott, Boston; Paul Davis, Cambridge; Raymond Kendall, East Boston; Earl Bacon, Lexington; Marian T. Little, Newburyport; Polly Parker, Northfield; Edward B. Williams, Taunton; Malcolm Masters, Winchester; Mary Lightfoot, Woburn.

"It makes me think of that verse in the Psalms," said Sally, softly, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!"

"Yes," cried Aunt Mary, "yes, my dear, you have expressed it exactly. For it's only then that we dare to pray the rest of that prayer: 'And establish Thou the work of our hands upon us. Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it!'"

Church School News.

AT Sioux City, Ia., the younger boys have been organized in a Boy Scout troop. The Good Fellowship Club has taken in Unity Girls and the Junior Unity Guild, holding meetings each Sunday evening. The programme for the meetings is a study hour led by the minister, music, and a social hour. Each month the Club gives a social and dance in the Sunday-school hall.

A contest has been carried on in the Sunday school for the purpose of increasing the membership. The school was divided into the "Reds" and the "Blues." The "Reds" were beaten by over seventy-five points and are now to serve a dinner to the victors.

The girls of the high-school class are active in the work of the school, one of the members playing the piano, two helping in the kindergarten department, and nearly all taking part in the special programmes which are part of the opening exercises. Several of the older girls sing in the church choir, one of them being a soloist. The school continues the support of a French orphan, Norbert Guillot, for whom they have cared for two years.

RECREATION CORNER.

ENIGMA LI.

I am composed of 13 letters.
My 2, 12, 13, is an animal.
My 12, 10, is a preposition.
My 6, 7, is a boy's nickname.
My 11, 1, 4, is a vegetable.
My 3, 12, is the imperative form of a verb.
My 5, 12, 7, 8, is something a ball does.
My 11, 4, 10, is used to cook with.
My 8, 9, 10, 2, is to allow another to take what belongs to you.

My whole is a well-known author.

SYBIL B. MESSER.

ENIGMA LIII.

I am composed of 22 letters.
My 17, 18, 4, is a girl's nickname.
My 12, 2, 6, 11, 13, 2, is a quantity.
My 7, 10, 12, is a quantity.
My 14, 15, is a preposition.
My 19, 2, 3, 5, 17, 8, is a city destroyed by the Germans.
My 20, 8, is an auxiliary verb.
My 1, 2, 10, 17, 22, 13, is a boy's name.
My 9, 16, 12, is an animal.
My 21, 16, 6, is something that runs by electricity.
My whole is a popular organization.

ISABEL HOWE.

EDITH CLOYES.

HOMONYMS.

(Words pronounced alike, but different in meaning.)

1. A verb and moisture on the ground.
2. A vase and to gain.
3. A covering for the face and a valley.
4. A room in a jail and to dispose of.
5. A vast expanse of water and to perceive.
6. A preposition and a number.
7. A number and having gained a victory.
8. The entire quantity and something dug in the ground.
9. A period of time and a possessive noun.
10. In this place and to apprehend by means of the ear.

OLGA SCHMUTZ.

MORE HIDDEN GIRLS' NAMES.

1. Go get help.
2. I have a license.
3. She painted it here.
4. There is an angel in a cloud.
5. One hundred names were listed.
6. Your child and mine are the same age.

EDWARD A. DRISCOLL.

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES IN NO. 23.

ENIGMA XLVII.—Charles Dickens.
ENIGMA XLVIII.—King Ahasuerus.
HIDDEN GIRLS' NAMES.—1. Clara. 2. Molly.
3. Nell. 4. Nora. 5. Ruth. 6. Ray. 7. Mary.
ANIMAL VERSE.—Capers; clamber; prattle; pugnacious; cowardly; sheepish; slothful; boarders; molest; catch.

WORD SQUARE.—R U S T
U T A H
S A V E
T H E N

THE BEACON

REV. FLORENCE BUCK, EDITOR

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